

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-15 EB-08 TRSE-00 /077 W  
-----260317Z 117876 /13  
R 222210Z APR 77  
FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0975  
AMCONSUL MONTREAL

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 QUEBEC 0169

E.O. 11652: NA  
TAGS: PINT, CA  
SUBJECT: THE BURDEN OF HISTORY WEIGHS HEAVY IN QUEBEC

REF: QUEBEC 0019

1. TO UNDERSTIND THE "SUDDEN" BURGEONING OF NATIONALISM IN QUEBEC, ONE MUST APPRECIATE THE "REVOLUTIONARY" SOCIAL CHANGES QUEBEC HAS UNDERGONE OVER THE PAST FIFTEEN (15) YEARS AND THE HISTORIC CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO THIS UPHEAVAL. FOR SOME TWO HUNDRED (200) YEARS AFTER THE HISTORIC DEFEAT OF THE FRENCH ON QUEBEC'S PLAINS OF ABRAHAM IN 1759, THE DESCENDANTS OF THE FRENCH COLONISTS, ABANDONED BY THEIR MOTHER COUNTRY, CONSTITUTED AN ISOLATED POCKET OF FRANCOPHONY IN A MORE DYNAMIC ANGLOPHONE SEA. TO ASSURE CULTURAL SURVIVAL, THEY INITIALLY RETREATED INTO A TRADITIONAL, VIRTUALLY AUTARKIC AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY CENTERED ON THEIR CHURCH, THE ONLY STRONG INSTITUTION LEFT TO THEM. INITIALLY SHELTERED BY THE "QUEBEC ACT" OF 1774 FROM FORCES OF ASSIMILATION, FRENCH CANADIAN SOCIETY GREW AND STRENGTHENED IN ITS ISOLATION, ENJOYING ONE OF THE HIGHEST BIRTH RATES IN MODERN HISTORY. FROM ITS BASE IN WHAT IS NOW QUEBEC PROVINCE, OVER ONE MILLION IN SURPLUS POPULATION EMIGRATED TO THE TEXTILE FACTORIES OF NEW ENGLAND AND TO THE NEW FRONTIERS OF WESTERN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES DURING THE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES.

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WM THE QUEBECOIS AT HOME CONTINUED TO LIVE ON FARMS OR IN RURAL TOWNS CLUSTERED ROUND THE SPIRE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH. THIS PATTERN WAS MAINTAINED UP TO THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY WITH LIFE FIGURATIVELY AND PHYSICALLY CENTERING ON A CHURCH FOLLOWING A STERN "JENSENIST" REGIME. EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES WERE FIRMLY UNDER CONTROL OF THE CLERGY WHICH PROVIDED TEMPORAL

AS WELL AS RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP TO A MAINLY COMPLIANT FLOCK. ADMITTEDLY, THERE WERE REPEATED EFFORTS BY MEMBERS OF THE SMALL SECULAR ELITE TO RESIST ASSIMILATION AND TO ASSERT FRENCH CANADIAN RIGHTS BUT IT WAS AN UNUSUALLY INTREPID POLITICIAN WHO FAILED TO CONSULT THE CONSERVATIVE CHURCH HIERARCHY BEFORE TAKING ANY IMPORTANT DECISION. THE IMPRUDENCE OF OPPOSING THE CLERGY WAS ILLUSTRATED EARLY BY THE DISASTROUS FAILURE OF PAPINEAU'S "REVOLT" IN 1837. WHILE THE QUEBEC CHURCH WOULD SUPPORT EFFORTS TO RESIST ASSIMILATING, IT WAS EQUALLY TENACIOUS IN OPPOSING FORCES ADVOCATING SOCIAL CHANGE. THIS PATTERN CONTINUED DOWN TO THE MID 20TH CENTURY WHEN SOME OF THE STRONGEST ADVOCATES OF RADICAL CHANGE BEGAN TO COME FROM WITHIN THE RANKS OF THE YOUNGER, MORE SOPHISTICATED CATHOLIC CLERGY.

3. THE FIRST EFFECTIVE AGENTS FOR CHANGE WERE INTRODUCED BY AN INTENSIVE EFFORT TO MODERNIZE THE QUEBEC ECONOMY LAUNCHED BY A NEW LIBERAL PARTY GOVERNMENT IN 1897, BASED MAINLY ON AN EXPLOITATION OF MINERAL AND FOREST RESOURCES, COUPLED WITH A HAR-  
NESSING OF THE ABUNDANT HYDROELECTRIC POTENTIAL. NEW LABOR INTENSIVE INDUSTRIES WERE FOUNDED TRIGGERING A MIGRATION TO CITIES AND TOWNS WHICH REDUCED THE EARLIER MASS MIGRATIONS TO THE UNITED STATES OF QUEBEC'S EXCESS POPULATION. UNDER THESE CONDITIONS, QUEBEC COULD NOT REMAIN AN ISOLATED, ANACHRONISTIC SOCIETY FOR LONG. WHILE THE CHURCH AND THE ANGLOPHONE BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENT WERE ABLE TO MAINTAIN THEIR HEGEMONY IN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES FOR THE FIRST FIFTY (50) YEARS OF THE PRESENT CENTURY, THE SEEDS OF CHANGE HAD BEEN SOWN AND THEIR GERMINATION ENCOURAGED BY THE INCREASING URBANIZATION OF THE POPULATION AND BY THE GREAT TECHNOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGES

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TAKING PLACE ALL AROUND THE QUEBECOIS IN OTHER PARTS OF NORTH AMERICA.

4. A NEW ELITE HAD GROWN TO MATURITY IN QUEBEC AFTER WORLD WAR II WHICH WAS URBAN, LAIC AND TECHNOCRATIC. IT CONTESTED THE POWER OF THE TRADITIONAL CHURCH AND ANGLOPHONE OLIGARCHIES. THE ELECTION OF THE LESAGE GOVERNMENT IN 1960 WAS POLITICAL RECOGNITION OF THE STRENGTH OF THIS NEW ELITE AND MARKED THE ADVENT OF THEIR "QUIET REVOLUTION." PREDICTABLY, THEIR FIRST MOVE AFTER COMING TO POWER WAS TO SECULARIZE EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES. SHORTLY AFTER, THE GOVERNMENT, AT THE INSTIGATION OF ITS MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES, RENE LEVESQUE, NATIONALIZED THE HYDROELECTRIC GENERATION AND DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM IN THE PROVINCE. WITHIN THREE (3) TO FOUR (4) YEARS OF THE BEGINNING OF THE QUIET REVOLUTION, THE LOCUS OF AN INCREASING PROPORTION OF IMPORTANT DECISIONS IN THE PROVINCE HAD BEEN TRANSFERRED FROM THE OAK PANNELLED BOARD ROOMS OF MONTREAL AND FROM THE ARCHBISHOPRIC TO THE MODERN OFFICES OF THE NEW CLASS OF FRANCOPHONE TECHNOCRATS IN QUEBEC CITY.

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-15 EB-08 TRSE-00 /077 W  
-----260316Z 112356 /42

R 222210Z APR 77  
FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC  
RO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 976  
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA  
AMCONSUL MONTREAL

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5. QUEBEC'S NUMEROUS CHURCHES ARE NOW VIRTUALLY EMPTY AND THE GOVERNMENT BUREAUS WELL-LARDED WITH FORMER CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS, MOST OF WHOM ARE ARDENT PEQUISTES. THE BURGEONING RANKS OF THE NEW ELITE HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY STRIDENT IN THEIR INSISTENCE ON BECOMING "MAITRE CHEZ-NOUS." (MASTERS IN OUR OWN HOUSE.) THIS AWAKENED NATIONALISM HAS BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SIDES. THE CRIPPLING EXPERIENCES OF DEFEAT AND THE LONG STRUGGLE FOR CULTURAL SURVIVAL HAVE DEEPLY MARKED THE QUEBECOIS COLLECTIVE EGO. THERE ARE STILL STRONG TRACES OF FEELINGS OF INFERIORITY AND INADEQUACY WHICH INFLUENCE ITS SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DECISIONS. THIS EXPLAINS, AT LEAST IN PART, BOTH THE QUEBECOIS INSISTENCE ON INDEPENDENCE AND THEIR RELUCTANCE TO SEIZE IT. ON THE ONE HAND, MANY QUEBEC INTELLECTUALS HAVE COME TO BELIEVE THAT THEIR ONLY CHANCE OF AVOIDING ASSIMILATION BY THEIR 250 MILLION ANGLOPHONE NEIGHBORS IN NORTH AMERICA IS TO ERECT THE BARRIERS THAT ONLY A FULLY INDEPENDENT STATE CAN AFFORD THEM. THUS, THEY REJECT BILINGUALISM AS MUCH FROM FEAR AS FROM PRIDE. ON THE OTHER HAND, A MAJORITY FEAR THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF A COMPLETE BREAK WITH THE ERSTWHILE ANGLOPHONE "BOSS." IN FACT, MANY, PARTICULARLY AMONG THOSE OVER THIRTY-FIVE (35) YEARS OF AGE, DOUBT THEIR OWN AND THEIR LEADERS' CAPACITY.

6. NONETHELESS, A NEW, MORE SELF CONFIDENT GENERATION IS GROWING  
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UP. THEY ARE BEING CONDITIONED TO A MILITANT NATIONALISM IN THEIR  
SCHOOLS BY TEACHERS WHO ARE ALMOST UNIVERSALLY IN FAVOR OF  
SEPARATISM. THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS AS YET THAT THIS NATIONALIST  
ENTHUSIASM COOLS WITH AGE AND ATTAINMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES.  
ULTIMATELY, TIME FAVORS SEPARATISM UNLESS SOMEONE OR SOMETHING  
TURNS THE GROWING POOL OF YOUTHFUL IDEALISM TOWARD A REALIZATION  
OF THE ADVANTAGES AS WELL AS THE RISKS INVOLVED IN CONTINUED  
UNION WITH THEIR MORE NUMEROUS ANGLOPHONE COMPATRIOTS.  
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